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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [BA](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#) [REGION](#) [OFFICIALS](#)
SUBJECT: CROWN PRINCE AND ADMIRAL FALLON DISCUSS REGIONAL
AFFAIRS

Classified By: Ambassador William T. Monroe for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)
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Summary

11. (C) Crown Prince Shaikh Salman told CENTCOM Commander Admiral Fallon March 23 that Bahrain was proud to work with the United States in the coalition maritime task forces and noted that it took Bahrain's participation to get Saudi Arabia to join. In response to Admiral Fallon's comments about the need for Arab support for Iraq's Sunnis in Anbar province, the CP said that the Bahraini government wants to work with the whole Iraqi government, not just with one faction such as the Sunnis, and push it to rise to its responsibilities to all of the country's citizens. He suggested that ending the de-Baathification program would send a good signal. He thought a "grand gesture" by the U.S. on the Palestinian issue would engender Sunni support. He warned of a resurgent Iran and said Iran's "tentacles" in the region must be severed. Bahrain would do all it could to help contain Iran. Shaikh Salman thanked Admiral Fallon for the Defense Department's support for the Bahrain School and requested that he weigh in with the Navy to allow its dependents to return to Bahrain. End Summary.

U.S. Always Welcome in Gulf Region

12. (C) In their introductory meeting, Crown Prince Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa told CENTCOM Commander Admiral Fallon March 23 that Bahrain is proud to work side-by-side with the United States in the coalition maritime task forces (CTFs) in the Gulf and Arabian Sea. The Bahraini Navy had extended its deployment in CTF-152 by two months and, following a break, would rejoin the mission. He asserted that Iran should not be able to form coalitions better than the U.S. and its allies in the region. He claimed that it took Bahrain's participation in the task force to motivate Saudi Arabia to join. The CP said that during his just-completed trip to India, he had been asked about the role of the United States in the Gulf region. He said he told the Indians that the United States is always welcome in the Gulf because it has brought security and stability to the countries of the region.

Security and Economic Growth in Iraq

13. (C) Admiral Fallon explained to the CP that Iraq is his top priority. Our new commander on the ground, General Petraeus, will focus on security matters, but also seek ways to stimulate economic growth and political reconciliation.

He said that Al Qaeda terrorists had found common cause with Sunni insurgents in the west of Iraq. The U.S. would welcome the support of our friends in the region to drive a wedge between local Sunnis and Al Qaeda elements. The Crown Prince replied that the GOB wants to work with the whole Iraqi government and push it to rise to its responsibilities to all Iraqi citizens. Bahrain cannot just work with Iraq's Sunnis or else it could be accused of promoting a sectarian divide. The GOB would prefer to try to blur the lines between Sunnis, Shias, and Kurds.

¶4. (C) Shaikh Salman stressed that there should be political space for all communities inside Iraq. Ending the de-Baathification program would be a way to show good will. He also warned of Iranian-backed Shia Iraqis carrying out the policies of a resurgent Iran. Admiral Fallon agreed that Iran was meddling in Iraq and said the U.S. will try to put an end to this support for violence in Iraq. The CP said he believes that sometimes people have to be allowed to sort out their issues, and then there can be engagement with whatever government emerges.

¶5. (C) Defense Minister General Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, who accompanied the CP, offered that winning people's hearts and minds takes a long time and requires collective action. If the Iraqi government does not try to bring in all its citizens, it will not succeed. A future Iraqi government, he said, might do better. The Crown Prince added that a way to engender Sunni support is for the United States, preferably President Bush, to make a "grand gesture" on the Palestinian issue similar to what President Reagan did during the Cold War in urging Gorbachev to "tear down this wall." This would bring about major changes in the Arab world.

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Severing Iran's "Tentacles"

¶6. (C) The Crown Prince said that Iran is like an octopus with its tentacles extended. These tentacles need to be severed. If there is progress on the Palestinian issue, Syria can be convinced to engage with Israel. At that point, there would be tremendous pressure on Syria to end its role as liaison between Iran and Hizballah, as well as its informal "alliance" with Iran. In the CP's view, Iran's welayat al-faqih (rule of the jurisprudent) system of government is "on its last legs." Some Iranian leaders have acknowledged that this form of government is not the best thing for the country or the people. But the regime will not crumble, he said. Rather, it needs to be cut from its sources of support. Iran must be contained, and Bahrain will do all it can to help.

¶7. (C) Commenting on his trip to India, the CP observed that the military seemed to be the most organized group in the country. Admiral Fallon said the U.S. wants to capitalize on its improved relations with India to promote greater Indian-Pakistani reconciliation. Shaikh Salman said that India would like to have a stronger presence in the Arab world, but he thought this should wait until its relations with Pakistan were better. India and Pakistan have a long history between them, and their rapprochement should not be rushed.

Defeating Extremism

¶8. (C) The Crown Prince said that stability was necessary to address the challenges in the region. Stating that democratic reform would not happen quickly and could cause massive instability, he suggested that the U.S. should accept a slower pace of reform in the region. One spark could allow

extremists on all sides to become empowered. The moderates need to be in control and build bridges within society. The GOB was facing challenges of rising sectarianism, underemployment, housing shortages, and a tense regional environment. Working in concert with the United States and regional countries, there can be stability in the area. The ideology of extremism has to be defeated, he said.

¶9. (C) The CP thanked Admiral Fallon for the Defense Department's long-standing support for the Bahrain School. To ensure the school's long-term future the Navy should consider allowing its dependents to return to Bahrain in the near future. NAVCENT Commander, Vice Admiral Cosgriff, pointed out that force protection was an important factor in determining whether to permit dependents to return and said that he would seek the CP's help to demonstrate to Washington this is under control. Admiral Fallon commented that he would positively transmit the CP's request to the CNO.

¶10. (U) Admiral Fallon cleared this cable.

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